

We Claim:

1. A method of announcing an individual apparatus to a system containing a central apparatus, which comprises the steps of:

announcing the individual apparatus to the system using optical communication; and

storing information about the individual apparatus in the system in the central apparatus.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein the announcing is effected to the central apparatus.

3. The method according to claim 1, which further comprises:

announcing an intermediary apparatus to the central apparatus;

announcing the individual apparatus to the intermediary apparatus resulting in an announcement; and

forwarding the announcement of the individual apparatus from the intermediary apparatus to the central apparatus.

4. The method according to claim 1, which further comprises performing the optical communication unidirectionally from the

individual apparatus doing the announcing to an apparatus for registering the announcing.

5. The method according to claim 1, which further comprises after the announcing has occurred, outputting an acoustic confirmation signal by at least one of an apparatus registering the announcing and the central apparatus.

6. The method according to claim 1, which further comprises forming the system as a radio network.

7. The method according to claim 1, which further comprises forming the system as a data acquisition and data collection system.

8. The method according to claim 1, which further comprises performing the optical communication in an infrared range.

9. The method according to claim 1, which further comprises forming the system as a consumption data acquisition and collection system.

10. An apparatus for communicating with at least one other apparatus, the apparatus comprising:

an optical interface for implementing optical communication with the at least one other apparatus, the optical communication providing information about the apparatus for announcing a presence of the apparatus to the at least one other apparatus.

11. A system, comprising:

a first apparatus being a central apparatus having a first optical interface for performing optical communication; and

a second apparatus selected from the group consisting of an individual apparatus and an intermediary apparatus and having a second optical interface for performing optical communication with said first optical interface, the optical communication providing information about said second apparatus for announcing a presence of said second apparatus to said first apparatus.

12. The system according to claim 11, wherein:

the system is a data acquisition and data collection system;

said central apparatus is a master data collector;

said intermediary apparatus is a data collector; and

said individual apparatus is a terminal apparatus and data communication between said apparatuses is effected by way of radio.

13. The system according to claim 12, wherein the system is a consumption data acquisition and collection system.

14. A system, comprising:

a first apparatus being a central apparatus having a first optical interface for performing optical communication;

a second apparatus being an individual apparatus and having a second optical interface for performing optical communication;
and

a third apparatus being an intermediary apparatus and having a third optical interface for performing optical communication, said third optical interface communicating with said first and second optical interfaces, the optical communication providing information about said second and third apparatuses for announcing a presence of said second and third first apparatuses to said first apparatus.

15. The system according to claim 14, wherein:

the system is a data acquisition and data collection system;

said central apparatus is a master data collector;

said intermediary apparatus is a data collector; and

said individual apparatus is a terminal apparatus and data communication between said first, second and third apparatuses is effected by way of radio.

16. The system according to claim 14, wherein the system is a consumption data acquisition and collection system.